

BURY THE DEAD

"Pilot"

Written by

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based on the short story

"DELIRIUM TREMENS"

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. RESTROOM - GAS STATION - NIGHT

RUBY, 59 and grizzled, stands in his skivvies, scrubbing a bloody shirt in the sink. There's a nasty wound on his knee. The open suitcase on the toilet is filled with sweat-stained dress-shirts, Polaroids, toiletries, and A NOTEBOOK.

The blood won't wash out, and he stuffs the shirt into the bottom of the trashcan, and then starts in on the bloody knee of his pants.

INT. MINI-MART - GAS STATION - NIGHT

RUBY's eyeing the cover of the National Enquirer nervously, suitcase hiding the wet pant-leg from the YOUNG MORMON behind the counter.

YOUNG MORMON

That's right. Show Low's another three hours that way, but it's nothing there. Why I moved here.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The gas pump is a useless scarecrow hunched at the black desert. Dusty hot winds close the mini-mart's door behind RUBY. Clutching the suitcase like his baby. One pant leg, the leg he favors on his way to the car, is sopping wet.

RUBY's car pulls off into the night. Once, a coyote's eyes burn across the road like flares, while the night-time flowers on the roadside blossom only to crumple in the morning sun.

OUT OF THE WIND COMES A FAMILIAR VOICE.

RUBY (V.O.)

What kind of man did you grow into?
Not like me, I hope.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF TIJUANA, MEXICO - DAYS BEFORE

THE PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC never stops writhing against itself between the pastel buildings with their aluminum roofs. BORDER AGENTS wave 70's and 80's era autos across the border on either side. The *avenidas* with bakeries selling baked GHOULS AND SUGAR SKULLS, the black licorice eyes focusing on --

THE GRINGO. RUBY. EVERYONE STEERS CLEAR OF HIM. The sun streaks across his crooked sunglasses -- tie and shirt sticking to his chest with sweat.

RUBY (V.O.)

I hope you're stubborn, like your mother.

He WAVES A POLAROID AT A WOMAN OFFERING CANDIED PUMPKIN.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Oye, por casualidad no conoces--

He knows which words to use but butchers the pronunciation.

CUT TO:

A MAN COMES OUT FROM BEHIND HIS TABLE OF BREAD OF THE DEAD, waving him away.

MAN

Vayase. Ya no nos molesta.

RUBY backs away, stumbles, even on BOTH GOOD LEGS.

A GROUP OF KIDS, DRESSED AS GHOSTS AND SKELETONS, ANXIOUS TO PEDIR MUERTOS (TRICK-OR-TREAT), point and laugh.

But a LITTLE BOY stares at RUBY from across the street. He's dressed for Sunday mass. RUBY is caught in the gaze when -- the BOY TURNS AND BOLTS.

RUBY CHASES after him. He ROUNDS the tight street corner -- takes it too quickly and TUMBLES DOWN, CLUTCHING HIS KNEE.

RUBY (V.O.)

A man's got to carry the whole of his weight.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - TIJUANA GHETTO - MOMENTS LATER

Puddles gather beneath patches of mold on the ceiling. LITTLE FOOTPRINTS lead to a door, and Ruby takes a knee. He PRESSES HIS EAR AGAINST the door, and hears a MURMUR OR WHIMPER.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

In the dark room, A SHAFT OF LIGHT spills through a draped window, onto a small rocking figure: the LITTLE BOY. SMOKE SNAKES FROM THE IRIDESCENT VIAL IN HIS HAND.

RUBY (V.O.)
 Like being trapped in the dark with
 nothing but your thoughts. That's
 what JESSUP said.

THE LITTLE BOY'S FACE IS ASH GREY AND CONTORTS INTO SHARP
 ANGLES.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK

A little boy sits on Ruby's lap. THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN
 is on TV, and the little boy holds a toy cowboy pistol, *cachew-*
ing at RUBY'S WIFE in the kitchen.

RUBY (V.O.)
 And I keep thinking, you've got to
 be twenty-eight by now. But when I
 close my eyes I still see my boy.

RUBY (CONT'D)
 Lone Ranger wouldn't do that.

LITTLE BOY
 The Lone Who?

RUBY takes the pistol and the boy whines. Across the TV a
 rocket-ship screams into clouds of dust.

RUBY'S WIFE
 I told you. They talked about toy
 guns in Reader's Digest.

RUBY
 Don't believe everything you read.

RUBY hands the toy gun back to the little boy.

TV NARRATION
 ...astronaut. A man barely alive.
 Gentlemen, we can rebuild him.

BACK TO:

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - TIJUANA GHETTO - BACK TO SCENE

RUBY presses his ear against the door, and like he's listening
 to its secrets: A DOUBLE-BARREL SHOTGUN NUZZLES THE OTHER
 SIDE.

CUT TO BLACK.

RUBY (V.O.)

Like being trapped in the dark with
your own shortcomings.

END OF COLD OPEN

B U R Y T H E D E A DACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. TRUCK - HIGHWAY - DAY

The STEREO CRANKED LOUD and the sweating beer pressed to his temple, COLE, 36, looks like he's made a living off the fine art of the sucker punch. The pay's not so great.

He looks twice passing the ROW OF CHILDREN playing near the road sign, "WELCOME TO SHOW LOW, ARIZONA."

THE KIDS, in grey alien masks and sweat suits, stalk to a playground in the distance. COLE shakes his head with a grin and drives on.

INT. TRUCK - LATER

COLE JERKS THE WHEEL, barely catching a dusty turnoff. The old truck creaks complaints and POPS A WRENCH out of the truck bed and into sight of the rearview -- SLAMMING THE BREAKS, COLE CATCHES THE WRENCH on its way down with the tailgate. He mutters appreciation of himself.

EXT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Guiding the truck now into the shade of a Ponderosa, he cuts the ignition, POPS THE BEER in his lap and sits staring.

CUT TO:

INT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - FLASHBACK

A lace curtain bellies out the kitchen window with the breeze. LORETTA, 29 and vibrant, brushes back a wisp of hair to pluck the unlit cigarette kept at her ear.

A HAND gingerly clasps her tiny shoulder. LORETTA raises her head to its owner, out of view, with a smile.

BACK TO:

INT. TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

The kitchen window is DARK AND EMPTY NOW. The shadows are longer. There are a few more empty cans on the truck's floorboard. THE SLAM OF A DOOR JERKS COLE out of it -- A DARK SEDAN VISIBLE IN THE REARVIEW.

COLE tilts the brim of his Stetson Silver Belly to spot RUBY, some poindexter, ascending the walkway.

RUBY doesn't even nod. Just waits. Looking weak and tired in his well-worn suit.

COLE steps out of the truck.

COLE
(fuck off)
Who are you?

RUBY
My name is Ruby. I'd like to ask you a few questions if you wouldn't mind.

COLE studies RUBY -- he's got a funny way of shifting to catch himself off one leg, refusing to buckle. COLE SPITS.

COLE
Thirsty? Place like this, man could drink an ocean.

RUBY shakes his head -- PREPPING TO WRITE IN HIS NOTEBOOK -- as COLE finishes his beer and hot-foots it up the walkway and tries the door. RUBY trails.

RUBY
Are you Cole Jenkins?

COLE
Name's Ghengis Khan.

RUBY
You wouldn't have happened to be the victim's boyfriend at one time?

COLE
What do you mean, "at one time"?
Wait a minute. What do you mean, "victim"?

RUBY
Loretta Thomas.

COLE
Victim to what, now? How could I be her boyfriend when I was living out of state? And victim to what, anyhow?

RUBY makes a conclusion, closes the NOTEBOOK -- the weight lifting off his face.

RUBY
Nevermind, then. It really shouldn't matter to you.
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

(goads)

Sure is a pretty place.

RUBY circles the front yard to COLE'S TRUCK. COLE follows, as if reclaiming it, and tugs another beer from the floorboard. He gestures to show he's got a lot of beer, and all the time in the world.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Things are tops over tails as it is.
Wouldn't be the most prudent thing
to spout rumors to everyone and
anyone, would it?

COLE

Problem solved. I'm not just anyone.
I'm her boyfriend.

RUBY

Now you're her boyfriend --
but a second ago you
weren't. Am I getting
that right? --

COLE

-- That's right -- are you
questioning my status as a
gentleman and true?

RUBY considers him, figuring something in his head.

RUBY

We might be talking about abduction.

COLE

Kidnapping? I bet it was that fool
she was seeing up in Winslow--

RUBY

Aliens, Mr. Jenkins.

COLE'S already in the truck -- patting himself down for the keys still in the ignition -- when RUBY'S WORDS REGISTER.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Alien abductions.

COLE let's the stubborn engine whine out.

COLE

You think it was Mexicans?

RUBY

I can show you where she is.

COLE

Then who were you looking for out
here?

RUBY

Whoever popped up. I'm a writer, of sorts. I heard she had lots of... friends.

COLE PUNCHES IT -- reversing tires bursting peddles into a brown cloud -- RUBY WATCHES HIM GO. Not too long after the tail lights flare in the dust, the TRUCK ROARS COLE'S RETURN.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I didn't mean--

COLE

Well?

RUBY

Well what?

COLE

You know damn well what.

RUBY

It's just up the road a ways. The drive should give us just enough time.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - DRIVING - DUSK

The wind sucks in through the open windows. COLE, steering with his knees, lights a cigarette.

COLE

People out here got too much time on their hands. Back on the nicotine out of boredom alone.

RUBY

How long have you been off it?

COLE

Yesterday. The drive in ain't on my top 10 either.

RUBY

(points)

Take this road here.

(more to himself than
to COLE)

I smoked when I was your age. Wifey let me have it every time. Was a while there I didn't care much about my body. Until it stopped caring about me.

COLE
Ain't that something.

RUBY
It is, actually.

COLE
What high school paper you say you were with?

RUBY
I'm free-lance.

COLE
Suppose that makes this town hot-button.

Ruby is cool, patient, playing the part of a father.

RUBY
Depending on one's perspective.

COLE
Before my less than voluntary retirement, I used to ranger out here. Trust me, "perspective" is one thing Show Low ain't overflowing with.

RUBY
That so?

COLE
It is, actually.

MORE CHILDREN play in their masks and sweat suits -- SPRINTING, CIRCLING, TAKING TURNS TWITCHING AND LEAPING THE FENCE POSTS AND TREES.

THE FOREST BEYOND IS DARK -- OMINOUS.

COLE CHUCKLES and pulls the truck over. HE FLASHES THE HEADLIGHTS to get their attention.

A few of the KIDS come over, some lifting off masks (afraid they're in trouble).

COLE (CONT'D)
Hey! Come here a minute. Ain't aliens supposed to move all slow and spooky?

THE KIDS LOOK AT EACH OTHER. ONE, a half-pint with a grey t-shirt pushed back on his head, SQUINTS OUT OF ONE EYE.

KID
Only in the movies.

COLE
Right... You kids watch the traffic,
there's a highway here.

COLE puts the truck back on the road -- DRIVING. RUBY gauges
his reaction. AFTER A MOMENT --

COLE (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Only in the movies?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. 5¢ DINER - SHOW LOW, AZ - NIGHT

TOWN IS A LITTLE STRIP OF ROAD PASSING A FEW STOREFRONTS. COLE parks the truck behind a train of cars by the side of the road. CLIMBING OUT -- they assess the CROWD GATHERED AT THE DOORS OF THE DINER.

MEN IN COWBOY HATS PUSHED BACK ON SWEAT-SHINED FOREHEADS -- hard hats propped on juttred knees -- cigarette smoke writing in the air. WOMEN -- SIMPLE DRESSES AND HIKING SHOES -- shifting their weight uneasily.

RUBY TAKES NOTES -- COLE sidling to peek over his shoulder -- Cole shakes his head.

COLE

For a geek, you got a handy way of dodging questions, Mister.

RUBY

Thank you.

COLE

So what is it you're doing? Loretta juggling you too, now?

RUBY

You can have her and every other one.

(flicking his wedding band)

The wifey, remember?

COLE

Regards to the little lady. I say save me the big girls. You know, this sort of thing doesn't make the papers. So why in hell drag your ass so far from Nancy Reagan's home cooked stroganoff?

RUBY

Would you believe in curiosity.

COLE

I'd believe ain't nobody setting the table back home, guy.

THAT STINGS. RUBY has to take a second.

RUBY

And what do you suppose brought them?

RUBY studies the townspeople with a kind of sadness. COLE -- REMINDING HIMSELF -- LIGHTS another cigarette.

COLE

Like I said. Folks got too much time on their hands. Besides, everyone goes for a scary story.

RUBY

We ought to hope you're right.

COLE

Speaking of stories--

COLE SWIPES THE NOTEBOOK IN ONE GO -- tucking his hat to head and HOPPING AWAY -- WAVING THE THING.

RUBY MAKES A SNATCH FOR IT -- but COLE, bigger and proudly immature with his game of oneupsmanship, holds the thing over his head.

COLE (CONT'D)

Payment for the ride.

RUBY

For the time being.
(taps his temple)
I have another one.

COLE

I'm just dying to know what's in here.

COLE SIFTS THROUGH ITS PAGES. RUBY stares down the road -- back in the direction of the KIDS.

COLE (CONT'D)

(pretending to read)
"Dear Diary, Johnny Chattanooga held my hand in class today--"
(freezes)
Hold it. How much of this page is true? The grey folks up in Yakima or whatever.

RUBY

Look, I'm coming off a retirement so long you may be right and I'm not married or have no son or never did. I tried telling that to the Sheriff. I tried telling lots of people.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

Everyone likes scary stories, sure,
but only until they start to feel
true.

COLE FOLLOWS RUBY'S GAZE -- TO THE POLICE CRUISER PARKED
OUTSIDE THE DINER.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. DIFFERENT GREASY SPOON - MORNING - FLASHBACK

RUBY sips coffee at a booth in the back -- WEARING THE SAME
SUIT -- THIS IS A FEW DAYS BEFORE TIJUANA, TOPS.

JESSUP takes the seat across from him. A big BLONDE SON-OF-
A-BITCH. 40's. LEATHER JACKET WITH A "HIGHWAYMEN" PATCH.
NECK TATTOOS MARK HIM AS A MADE-GUY.

JESSUP tosses RUBY AN ENVELOPE -- A GRAINY PHOTO OF A DARK
HAired MAN IN HIS Late-20'S. UNDERNEATH THE TABLE -- RUBY
hands JESSUP an ENVELOPE FILLED WITH CASH.

JESSUP

Guy using the same name showed up
down south about a month ago.

RUBY

Whereabouts down south, then?

JESSUP

Gotta lay off that caffeine,
buttercup. It ain't him. Look at
it. Some junkie mugged your guy,
using his I.D., my guess.

RUBY

County records had him moving south
into Snow Flake less than a year
ago.

JESSUP SHRUGS.

JESSUP

Look. I like you. You pay well and
play by the rules. But this shit
ain't gonna lead you nowhere, you
can trust me on that.

RUBY

Is that all?

JESSUP SIGHS and leans back.

JESSUP

Per this fucking enlistment.

RUBY

Whereabouts down south, then.

JUMP BACK TO:

INT. 5¢ DINER - SHOW LOW, AZ - NIGHT

It's stifling -- congealed grease leaving a sheen on the vinyl furniture, snailing down even the farthest wall from the kitchen. A GROUP OF TOWNSPEOPLE fanning their sweat beaded brows. THEY CROWD AROUND SOMETHING AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM, NAMELY...

THE GIRL LORETTA, 33, SITTING AT A BOOTH -- NOT JUST SKINNY, BUT SKELETAL -- short dark hair an inkspot against the halo of light above her, a far cry from the woman COLE remembers. SHE'S WATCHING --

The ORNATE GLASS TEA TIMER set before her -- a svelte hand flips it so the SAND BEGINS TO FALL -- COUNTING DOWN. Tea pot in mid-brew and empty porcelain cup and saucer waiting.

We see the hand belongs to -- SINCLAIR, 42, sitting across from LORETTA -- BRITISH ACCENT -- WEARS HIS MUSTACHE LIKE A BIRTHRIGHT -- WYATT EARP HAT SELDOM LEAVING HIS HEAD.

SINCLAIR

And then what happened?

SINCLAIR turns his eyes not to LORETTA, but to the BRIGHT GOLD STAR on his chest, pinching it side-to-side, watching the light play.

RUBY slinks through the front door, CHIMING THE LITTLE BELLS ABOVE IT and giving away his entrance. THE TOWNSPEOPLE ignore it, but SINCLAIR wheels around in his chair.

THE TOWNSPEOPLE follow suit. SINCLAIR nods at RUBY in grim recognition, then rolls his eyes when COLE walks in after him.

COLE WATCHES LORETTA, who stares at the floor.

COLE

(to Ruby)

Like I was saying. Just the big girls from now on. Skinny minnies are all nuts.

A CONCERNED FATHER, a local logger, interrupts sinclair's interview --

LOGGER

We don't have time for this. We need to get back out there, now!

LORETTA

Their hands were shaking so hard. Their heads were shaking so hard.

LOGGER

--Out there waiting for us to find them!

LORETTA

It took them.

SINCLAIR

No need to start bucking--

LORETTA

Don't you understand!? It took them!

LORETTA COLLAPSES IN ON HERSELF -- rocking back and forth, eyes receding into the shadow of her brow.

A LIGHT FLICKERS THE STOREFRONT WINDOW BRIGHT WHITE, then steady, from a pinpoint somewhere in the sky, A BLINDING CASCADE filling the room. LOCAL LOGGER raises a hand to his eyes and COWERS.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

I can't go back!

RUBY steps towards the window, arms slack, SHOWERED IN LIGHT, eyes wide like an excited child's.

COLE

Oh hell.

COLE throws the door open casually -- his dark silhouette is a ghostly, gangly thing -- and for a moment it's like the heavens have come down for us.

COLE (CONT'D)

Would you get ahold of yourselves?

CUT TO:

EXT. 5¢ DINER - SHOW LOW, AZ - CONTINUOUS

THE NEWS VANS SHINE THEIR BRIGHT SPOTLIGHTS DOWN ON EVERYTHING. The NEWSCASTERS jockey for position and practice their scripts -- A LEGGY BLONDE in a pencil skirt calls for more powder and picks at something in her teeth.

INT. 5¢ DINER - SHOW LOW, AZ - CONTINUOUS

SINCLAIR squinting at the NEWSCASTERS through the blinds. He returns to the table -- wiping the mini-blind DUST off his fingers with disgust -- and finds the SAND on the TEA TIMER has run to the bottom.

SINCLAIR

Reckon questions ain't going to answer themselves.

SINCLAIR pours the tea and takes a sip. Disappointed, he tosses the water down a sink behind the counter. He tucks his shirt under the generous flesh of his back and readjusts his hat.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Why don't we all step outside, so I don't waste time saying this twice.

COLE

Gonna be another big tourist season, Sheriff. Sure you're pleased with yourself.

SINCLAIR heads outside, followed by the TOWNSPEOPLE eager to hear what he has planned, to be on TV, or both. COLE shouldered the door open for them.

COLE (CONT'D)

Wheel of Fortune'll be on soon. Move along.

They GRUMBLE amongst themselves, particularly the other LOGGERS and FAMILY MEMBERS -- "responsibility to town," "not a ranger anymore," "kooky ex," "he's not much of anything anymore."

COLE (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah. My reputation recedes me.

When all have left, it's just RUBY, COLE, AND LORETTA.

LORETTA keeps her eyes fixed on the ground. She drains the glass of water in her hand, wiping her mouth with the bone of her arm.

COLE takes tentative steps toward her, the BEAT of his boots amplified by the hardwood, and CROUCHES NEXT TO HER.

LORETTA LOOKS AT HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME. Smiles. Not the smile we remember from her at the kitchen window, though. The life has gone out of it.

Cole gets in close.

COLE (CONT'D)

Hey, Lo.

CUT TO:

EXT. 5¢ DINER - MOMENTS LATER

SINCLAIR is bombarded, REPORTERS on one side and TOWNSPEOPLE on the other -- their QUESTIONS COMING AT HIM IN A CACOPHONY. SINCLAIR is thrust into the role of ringleader here, and he plays it a little too well.

SINCLAIR

(responding)

The most important thing to do is to keep up with the search posse. As we speak, Deputy Hislop and members of the community are blanketing the area.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - FOREST - DUSK

The DEPUTY CRUISER blocks the small one-lane road. The flashing siren illuminates a line of SILHOUETTES marching up the hill...

EXT. FOREST - THE SEARCH POSSE - DUSK

Nightfall seeps between the trees. More TOWNSPEOPLE -- HUNTERS -- comb the forest with flashlights, rifles, and dogs.

DEPUTY HISLOP, 22 and green, holds up the line and points to the WEST. One of MEN argues with him, pointing fervently to the EAST.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)

And as night falls, it's even more important that we keep up that search. As soon as we're done here, give you my word, I'll be saddling up, myself, directly.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOW LOW MOTEL - NIGHT

The buzzing neon sign reads SHO W TEL.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A WOMAN -- early 40s, an aged beauty -- exits the bathroom wringing her hair in a towel with her left hand, a wedding ring there. She watches a "DYNASTY"-style drama on the TV bolted to the corner -- big hair, dated clothes.

She flips the knob on the ancient TV to catch SINCLAIR finishing up his interview.

WOMAN

"Search posse?" Limey sonafabitch
is too cute.

She checks the watch on the nightstand before slipping it on her wrist, then begins lighting candles, starting with one perched on the Gideon Bible next to the bed.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Show you saddled-up.

SINCLAIR (ON THE TV)

I'm joined by the wives of three of
the four missing men.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK INSIDE THE DINER - CONTINUOUS

LORETTA struggles to ease the shaking of the bony arms in her lap. Her hand strikes for the sweating glass on the table, ice CLINKING, and she manages to hold it calm and still in the new silence.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)

We've recovered a local woman near
the site of their last known location.
But questioning, as of yet, has given
little clue as to the circumstances
regarding their disappearance.

LORETTA's eyes WELL with tears when she recognizes COLE.

COLE

Lo, what happened out there?

LORETTA

It's good to see you, Cole.

RUBY steps between them and takes COLE'S shoulder in confidence. COLE stares at RUBY'S hand in defiance until he removes it.

COLE
What the hell do you want out of
this thing, mister?

BUT LORETTA'S OUT OF HER SEAT AND HEADING FOR THE BACK DOOR.
RUBY AND COLE whip back to her.

LORETTA
We've got to go before he comes back.

RUBY
She's right.

COLE
Wait a minute, wait a minute--

RUBY
Sinclair's coming back through that
door and then she's out of our hands.
We have to go now. We both know
there's more going on here than a
few missing loggers.

COLE
Since when?

LORETTA
(at Cole)
Only if you take me. And only if
it's just us.

COLE is stunned as LORETTA crosses the room and joins RUBY
near the BACK EXIT. But, after a moment, he tucks the Silver
Belly tight on his head.

COLE
(eyes on RUBY, but
directed at LORETTA)
Good. The drive'll us enough time
to talk.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

OVER BLACK:

LORETTA (V.O.)
I think we turned here.

FADE IN:

INT. COLE'S TRUCK - FOREST/WHITE MOUNTAINS, AZ - NIGHT

The headlights flare the rutted roads that lead the truck up the mountain like a train through a dark tunnel. COLE at the wheel, RUBY and LORETTA shouldered beside him.

COLE
You think?

RUBY admonishes him with a fatherly look.

COLE (CONT'D)
Pardon? What's that you say?
(beat)
Sinclair's got half the county up searching the other side of the hill. What the hell's he doing if Lo told him they were working up this side yesterday?

RUBY
Buying time.

COLE
Buying time for what?

RUBY
(forget it)
I don't see how either of you remember anything in this place at all.

LORETTA ignores them, instead tugging on a strand of hair at her temple. A small bald patch has begun to form there.

LORETTA
Yeah. Here. Turn here.

COLE lets the road guide them off to the right.

COLE
Put me back in LA and I'd get lost, and I been there almost a year.

RUBY
Your parents raised you out here?

COLE
 Just the mom. Local wild land fire
 team took me in. Kept me out of
 trouble. Or tried to.

RUBY
 Is that when you tried rangersing?

LORETTA
 Emphasis on tried.

COLE looks at Loretta.

RUBY
 Whatever happened to your dad?

RUBY pats at his pockets for his notebook. COLE taps his
 hat, as if he's thinking, and GRINS when RUBY realizes it's
 still stowed safely under there.

COLE
 Who knows. Probably deserved what
 he got, though, right?

RUBY'S smile loses its genuine slack and tightens into a
 mask.

RUBY
 More than likely.

LORETTA SCREAMS AS -- THE HEADLIGHTS WASH

THE CREATURE

clean of the darkness. The GAUNT GREY THING LURCHES across
 the path, flashing a TOOTHLESS GRIMACE and brandishing the
 lifeless fox in its hand, and DASHES OFF --

RUBY AND COLE, caught in their conversation, barely catch a
 glimpse of the thing, but WE SAW IT JUST FINE --

ALL IN THE MOMENT before the headlights light up a TREE TRUNK
 and COLE STOMPS, TOO LATE, ON THE BRAKES.

The cab is silent as they register what has just happened,
 sharing the same look.

COLE
 (WTF)
 That was close. We could've hit
 that poor boy and his dog.

RUBY grasps for COLE'S hat, knocking it loose, but COLE
 reaches the notebook first.

RUBY

Turn to page... page... shit! Just
flip through until you see something
that looks like that!

COLE pages through it until he finds --

A NEWSPAPER CUT-OUT --

of a BONY FIGURE standing before a CONVENIENCE CLERK. It's
skin is ashen, like a moth's wing, the dips of its temples
are dark eyes outside of its own blank ones. The HEADLINE
reads, "BRUTAL RURAL MAULING ONE OF MANY SIGHTINGS IN GREEN
RIVER, WASHINGTON."

RUBY'S halfway out the door, struggling with his seat belt.

RUBY (CONT'D)

We've got to find it! No one's seen
them up close and--

COLE

And what?! Jesus, old man! I'm
starting to think I liked you better
when you had the first lady back
home.

COLE SMACKS RUBY'S HAND from the buckle and tries to loosen
it himself. It doesn't budge. He pulls and tugs until
finally settling for the KA-BAR from his boot sheath. HE
CUTS THE BELT LOOSE, holding the buckle-headed thing like a
limp snake.

COLE grabs A RIFLE STOWED AWAY ON THE RACK behind the cab
bench and tosses the seat belt into the truck bed.

COLE (CONT'D)

You got to jiggle it.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - WHITE MOUNTAINS, AZ - LATER

A mile marker rots by the side of the road and COLE points
the group to an OVERGROWN TRAIL. They hop fallen trees and
duck branches, their FLASHLIGHTS doing a poor job of guiding
them up the mountain.

LORETTA is on edge, SHRINKING FROM BRANCHES, chasing the
yellow column of her light rather than directing it.

COLE

Camp's up this way. This look
familiar?

LORETTA, in a kind of daze, heads off on her own.

COLE (CONT'D)

Lo!

RUBY

Loretta, I'm an old man. I've done plenty enough to know not to judge. So why don't you just tell us what you were all up to out here.

COLE

You partying up here with the Shepherd boys, Lo? You doing them two at a time now?

RUBY stops, pulling her aside. COLE corners them both.

RUBY

Look at me, Loretta. It was more than just partying, wasn't it?

LORETTA

The boys had their labs out here.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LABS - FOREST - FLASH

It's little more than a single room cabin, filled with BURNERS, PYREX BEAKERS, BAGS OF DRY CHEMICALS -- CHEMISTRY EQUIPMENT. TWO MEN IN HAZMAT SUITS AND GAS MASKS -- THE SHEPHERD BOYS, GEOFF AND CLIFF (FATHER AND SON, IN THAT ORDER) -- COOK UP METH.

OUTSIDE --

TWO OTHER LOGGERS load up the truck for the day. LORETTA rocks herself on a tree stump.

BACK TO:

EXT. FOREST - WHITE MOUNTAINS, AZ - NIGHT

COLE

I knew it. Damn it, Lo! And you the high and mighty one, whenever it came to me.

LORETTA'S EYES BULGE. This is more than anger.

LORETTA

That stuff you'd buy in Phoenix, that was kids' stuff compared to this.

RUBY
How long have they been cooking?

COLE
I knew when I left you'd just--

LORETTA
Maybe if you hadn't left--

RUBY
Quiet now! Both of you.

RUBY puts a hand on COLE'S shoulder, and it seems to do something for all of them: calming for COLE, reassuring for LORETTA, and giving RUBY time to piece things together.

COLE stomps off a ways and shuts off his flashlight. RUBY shines his light on COLE, who doesn't turn his squinting eyes away. RUBY lets the light fall to COLE'S boots, and it's obvious: COLE is giving this to RUBY, the questioning.

RUBY (CONT'D)
You told the Sheriff you saw a light up here. Like a fire.

LORETTA
It was an explosion.

RUBY
The labs. They didn't realize what they had on their hands, did they?

COLE
Yeah, no shit. Shep and his brother couldn't cook toast.

LORETTA
They'd last a while, healthier even, and then-- the boys--

COLE
I hate to break it to you, but I've a feeling you two been drinking from the same well.

RUBY
That picture, the Green River story. A few years ago I was following a lead on my-- On a story. And it took me to a middle of nowhere town like this one in Washington. I-I don't know how to explain it.

COLE
Give me the ten peso version.

RUBY

Imagine if someone found a way to weaponize a crystalline hydrochloride, some sort of ultra-potent combinate that could metabolize a baby elephant out of a fucking duck, then that same someone trickled it down to the podunk masses. How's that for an explanation.

LORETTA

They were cooking at a site.

COLE

I told you, ain't no camp sites out here. Nearest one's a good--

LORETTA

A landing site.

RUBY

A landing site.

COLE LAUGHS.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Even if you don't believe, Cole, think about it. It makes sense. A site's good for post-cards, or space-invader movies, but it's not exactly prime real estate. The ones who believe won't come near the place. The rest of the world, hell, COLE, they're like you. They don't believe in anything hard enough to stick around.

RUBY and LORETTA are both looking at COLE now, and for the first time COLE won't meet their eyes.

LORETTA let's him off the hook when she spots something and, as if moved by an unseen hand, marches off the trail. A few dozen yards from the men and she comes to the SMOLDERING, RAMSHACKLE BOARDS OF THE CABIN.

COLE approaches RUBY in confidence, their backs to LORETTA.

COLE

Okay. So they fight over their stashes, get carried away, and blow themselves up. Here we are. I'm with you up to that point.

LORETTA toes aside a board, and looks back at the men over her shoulder.

A SMALL IRIDESCENT VIAL, precise and cold and gleaming, lays underneath. She looks over her shoulder once again.

RUBY & COLE--

RUBY

Yes, here we are. But not because of the explosions or the fighting, though I'm sure they'll do that if they have to. After one dose, it's already an addiction. After two... who knows. And the labs, the elements they were mixing were creating explosions so big, char fills the sky. Booms wake campers from miles away. People see bright lights in the old landing zones.

COLE

And more tabloid alien-shit piles up stinking and high.

RUBY

You were right. It's going to be another good tourist season.

COLE'S FOOT CRUNCHES OVER SOMETHING and he hits the beam of his flashlight. An iridescent sheen covers the ground like jewels at the bottom of the sea. RUBY's posture is hound-like. COLE kicks at the shards and they CHIME.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I don't know what this is. I mean, I've never read about anything like this.

Off a ways, there's a BIG PIT IN THE GROUND, a tractor and a TREE STUMP PULLED OUT OF THE EARTH.

COLE

Wait. Where'd she go?

LORETTA -- the crystal vial cupped in her hands opens of its own accord, CLINKING AND OSCILLATING like a child's wind-up music box. A SELF-CONTAINED FLAME IGNITES within the vial and LORETTA holds it to her mouth, TAKING A DEEP BREATH.

RUBY & COLE-- SPRINT TO HER, finding her on her knees and clutching the thing. The eyes rolled back in her head are not a natural white, but a METALLIC CODA CHROME. She watches them approach and cocks her head a little.

That's when they hear the BANSHEE SHRIEK CUT THROUGH THE NIGHT.

And the CODA CHROME EYES FLASHING OPEN in the forest surrounding them -- TWO, FOUR, EIGHT IN ALL -- like moths slowly waking their wings.

COLE (CONT'D)

Lo!

COLE DROPS HIS FLASHLIGHT and it rolls away, raking an oblique column of light over them. HE RAISES THE RIFLE, watching THE EYES CLOSE IN ON THEM.

COLE (CONT'D)

Baby, let's go, you gotta get up.

RUBY

It doesn't belong to us, Loretta.
It's not for us. Remember what happened to them. Don't you see even now, you should be able to drop it?

Sweat beads down LORETTA'S brow, down her nose. Her eyes close into slits. Her hands and head begin to CONVULSE, A STRUGGLE RIPPING DOWN HER ENTIRE BODY.

As quickly as they'd arrived, the convulsions dissipate. She lowers her hands with a sigh and opens her fingers on the vial, in another moment it'll slip from her grasp.

THE CREATURES STRIKE.

It's hard to say what happens next because it's dark and it all happens so fast.

There's the THUD OF A TACKLING BLOW THAT TAKES LORETTA OFF HER FEET. A veiny hand CLUTCHES HER NECK and keeps her on her knees. The vial is RIPPED AWAY from her with A CRY THAT'S HALF-JOY AND HALF-PAINFUL MOAN.

THERE'S A SICK CRACK AND THE GIRL'S HEAD ANGLES to the sky, though her body hangs belly down.

COLE AND LORETTA LOCK EYES FOR THE FINAL TIME.

COLE COCKS THE RIFLE AND FIRES OFF A ROUND. THE CREATURES jump back a pace or two, REGROUP, and begin to creep in on them again. One of them, IN TATTERED SKIVVIES, SHRIEKS, FLASHING TEETH THAT HAVE BEEN FILED DOWN RAZOR-SHARP.

COLE and RUBY look to each other, "What now?" written all over their faces, and take a slow step back once, twice.

COLE

Next time you wanna go looking for answers, I'll gladly remind you there's such a thing as dumb questions.

RUBY

Look.

THE CREATURES let the light run over their hunched backs, probe their deep eye sockets and dark, gaping mouths with rotting teeth.

WE'RE LOOKING A THE MISSING LOGGERS. They're men, yes, but ASHEN AND HOLLOW NOW, THEIR FLESH METABOLIZED from within by that same energy DARTING THEIR EYES, TWITCHING THEIR FINGERS, AND CHATTERING THEIR JAWS.

THEY SNAP THEIR TEETH AT EACH OTHER, facing off and circling like birds, HOPPING OVER LORETTA'S DEAD BODY. One of them snatches the vial from the ground and the others turn in on him, ignoring RUBY AND COLE.

RUBY (CONT'D)

They're going after the vial. We can make it if we go now.

COLE

I'm not leaving her. And I'm not leaving without that thing.

RUBY

She's gone. We've got to get Sinclair.

COLE

It's the only proof anything went on here but murder. They won't come looking for you! Guess who that leaves.

RUBY

They'll believe us.

COLE

Why, Ruby?

RUBY

We'll be telling the truth.

COLE

Right. Like you, and your runaway wife and son.

The words reverberate between them. RUBY backs away. COLE concedes, the guilt of his words clear on his face.

COLE (CONT'D)
Go get the truck started.

COLE RAISES THE RIFLE AND MARCHES TOWARDS THE CREATURES WITHOUT LOOKING BACK.

The first one -- A BIG-BONED LOGGER, shoulders like armor exposed by thin skin -- TAKES THE RIFLE STOCK TO THE JAW. A RIFLE SHOT TO THE STERNUM CRUMPLES HIM.

The next -- A SMALL GUY, ONE OF THE SHEPHERD BOYS -- takes another BLAST THAT SPEARS HIM TO THE GROUND.

With the rifle stock COLE TOMAHAWKS the next skull coming at him.

AND HE TAKES THE VIAL FOR HIMSELF.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLE'S TRUCK - FOREST - NIGHT

RUBY, grumbling to himself, reaches for the driver side door handle. HIS EYES CAUGHT STARING AT THE WEDDING RING ON HIS FINGER. He looks back into the forest at the sudden SILENCE...

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. BALLROOM - FLASHBACK

Elegant and shining. Chandeliers cascade bright light onto the WEDDING GUESTS. DANCING UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT, serenaded by a 12 piece chamber orchestra are--

RUBY AND HELEN

Young, and beautiful together. RUBY leans in to whisper something and HELEN laughs.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORTLAND HIGH RISE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Only one of many office windows is lit. HELEN'S CAR ZOOMS into the parking lot and parks it right on the sidewalk, balloons squeaking against the back seat. SHE'S FRANTIC -- hopping out without cutting the ignition and marches right to the intercom at the front door.

RUBY (OVER INTERCOM)
Booker, Price, and Hellman.

HELEN
It was his goddam first communion.

RUBY
I've got work to do. Go home.

HELEN leans on the button, but doesn't say anything. After a while, RUBY sighs.

RUBY (CONT'D)
This is a small firm, Helen. Don't give the security guys something to talk about.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. BACK TO THE THICK OF IT - NIGHT

THE VIAL IN COLE'S PALM.

But then the rest CLOSE IN, SHRIEKING AND SNAPPING their jaws. He makes a break for it -- a shadow racing past the big dark blots of the trees.

A V-FORMATION OF GHOST BIRDS cut through the wilderness after him.

EXT. COLE'S TRUCK - FOREST - CONTINUOUS

COLE JUMPS in the truckbed and RUBY'S already got the thing rolling. An ASHEN ARM CATCHES the tailgate. COLE STOMPS the flesh free of the steel.

The truck rolls along gingerly. COLE SLAPS the side of the bed in frustration.

COLE
Hey dipshit, the gas is on the right!

THE SPEEDOMETER needle bounces just below 10 MPH. RUBY checks on COLE through the rearview.

RUBY
You wanna play little-boy games,
here we are. Give me back my notebook!

One CREATURE splits off into the trees and COLE watches, wide-eyed, as he's lost somewhere beside them.

COLE
Uncle!

RUBY
Say you know I'm not crazy!

COLE

A helluva way to prove it, but okay.
Okay!

RUBY squints past the dirty windshield, trying to keep the truck on the trail without flipping it, but quickly enough to outrun the pacing CREATURES. He's not doing so great.

A CREATURE HOPS A TREE STUMP AND LANDS CLEAN IN FRONT OF COLE on the truck bed. COLE FIRES A ROUND -- the CREATURE TAKES THE BULLET IN THE BELLY AND GOES FLYING OFF THE TRUCK.

The rifle clicks completely free of bullets -- just as a CREATURE FLIES FROM THE TREES beside them and LANDS ON THE BUMPER with a firm-footed THUD.

COLE tries the tomahawk move again with the rifle-stock, but the CREATURE blocks the blows with its forearms, unfazed by the flesh shearing off its bones. It rips the rifle from COLE'S grip and tosses it a side.

The truck hits a rut in the road -- but still this ONE MANAGES TO KEEP ITS FOOTING -- and the sudden bump sends COLE'S RUSTY WRENCH sliding into the rounded steel wheel well next to him.

COLE (CONT'D)

Eat this!

COLE CHUCKS THE WRENCH, spinning it through the air... MISSING THE CREATURE BY A LONG SHOT.

COLE watches it pass into the night.

The CREATURE watches it go, too. IT SNORTS AT HIM, showing rotting brown teeth, the missing ones bridged with slobber. It moves as if to roar, but instead lets go a small, pitiful MOAN.

CREATURE

Pleeeese...?

COLE stops scrambling for another weapon, stops moving altogether. They're FROZEN there together for a moment.

Then the thing seems to give up diplomacy, shakes its head clean, and bares its teeth for the attack.

COLE reaches for the KA-BAR in his boot and comes up with an empty sheath. He FLINCHES.

BACK IN THE CAB WITH RUBY, the forgotten KA-BAR bounces off the bench and onto the floorboard.

THE CREATURE HAS COLE IN AN INSTANT -- bringing an arm down on him and getting a FIRM GRIP ON HIS THROAT. COLE is CHOKING to death, the thing's breath spraying his face, eyes struggling to keep open when he sees it --

THE BELT AND BUCKLE he had cut free of RUBY is there under the CREATURE'S mud encrusted foot. His fingers reach out for it... almost there, just a little closer...

HE REACHES IT. TWISTS IT behind the thing's ankle and TUGS AS HARD AS HE CAN.

THE CREATURE loses its footing, FALLING BACK ON ITSELF, but TAKING COLE WITH HIM. And like that, THE PICTURE IS REVERSED, only the damn thing still has COLE by the throat.

With a final GRUNT, COLE SPINS the belt buckle in his hand until it makes a pretty breathing sound. It's a SHINING CHROME CIRCLE in the air above them.

HE SENDS IT DOWN WITH ALL HIS WEIGHT INTO A BREAKAWAY SKULL.

COLE laughs out of shock.

The BLOODY chrome buckle, still in his hand, UNLATCHES INTO TWO PIECES ONCE AGAIN.

COLE
(choked)
Sonofabitch.

RUBY
What happened?

COLE
Got the seat belt unlatched.

RUBY
Did you jiggle it?

The truck accelerates and slows, sways and jerks. But still the CREATURES, pock marked with bullet holes and bludgeonings, keep coming for the truck.

The CREATURE in the bed of the truck with COLE slides with the jerking truck, COMING BACK TO LIFE despite its CAVED-IN SKULL.

COLE
You've got to be fucking...

COLE KICKS at it, almost casting it off the truck until the thing grabs the open tailgate with a SNARL and hangs on for dear life.

RUBY snaps his head back and strategically SWERVES THE TRUCK, trying to shake the CREATURES and avoid ramming the boulders lining the road.

It's no use. The CREATURES fill up the rearview mirror. COLE is nowhere to be seen.

RUBY

Throw it! Throw it out now!

COLE RAISES THE VIAL AND CHUCKS IT into the night as hard as he can, a straightaway fly ball. The CREATURES tagging the truck VEER OFF AND FOLLOW ITS PATH like a pack of wild dogs chasing a big fat steak.

All except the one hanging from the tailgate, who watches the group descend on the vial, then turns back to COLE with a SHRIEK. It PULLS ITSELF FORWARD with its arms and keeps coming.

RUBY, watching through the mirror, turns back to the road just in time to see it RAMP UP OVER A SAND WASH.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Oh, dear.

COLE feels the entire truck RATTLE with its ascent and shoots both legs out against the sidewalls, arms up to brace himself.

THE TRUCK TAKES AIR.

And when it touches down, the TAILGATE -- A REVERSE GUILLOTINE -- FOLDS THE CREATURE'S GREY BODY IN ON ITSELF, THEN SPITS IT OFF INTO THE NIGHT.

RUBY grips the wheel and looks back.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Cole?!

He brings the pickup to a quick stop. RUBY jumps out of the truck, rushing to the bed.

COLE'S SOILED HAND settles on the sidewall. Eventually, he drags the rest of his limbs out of the bed. Massaging his throat, eyes clenched shut in pain. But still, he manages a small, brief glare at RUBY.

COLE

This what passed you through driver's ed in fifty-fucking-three?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. SHOW LOW MOTEL - NIGHT

Past the buzzing SHOW LOW MOTEL sign, one of the room's windows broadcast's the LOUD SCREAMS OF A WOMAN. Something horrible could be happening to her.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM

TIME JUMPS ON THE OTHER SIDE of the window. On the bed, SINCLAIR rolls a cigarette squinting at the TV in his best Eastwood impression. MAGGIE, the woman we met in this same room earlier, sits beside him, watching her stories.

MAGGIE

I know he's not the best man. But when you find my husband burned up in some shack, would you do me a favor?

SINCLAIR finally gets the cigarette rolled and appraises it.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Will you lie? Not for Ole' Shep. Fuck him. But for me.

SINCLAIR considers her, letting the words sink in.

SINCLAIR

For you? Darling, I'd dig his grave.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MORNING

The place is half gift shop, half administrative hub. Postcards, Route 66 stickers, and other kitschy oddities fill the display stands. A big sign advertises "ZANE GREY WESTERN AUTHOR HOUSE VISITOR PASSES SOLD HERE."

SINCLAIR sits behind a polished desk, pristine uniform freshly starched, sipping a teacup labelled, "BEST LITTLE WAFFLEHOUSE IN TEXAS." He's looking at the two sad sacks across from him -- RUBY AND COLE. Dirty, bloody, and tired.

SINCLAIR cocks his head and looks past them, somberly studying the muddy footprints backing out the front door.

COLE COUGHS.

SINCLAIR

Good thing for you two half the county's sweeping that hill.

COLE

The wrong side.

SINCLAIR

Now, you expect me to believe all that?

RUBY

It's the truth.

SINCLAIR

And the girl?

Ruby looks away. An overlarge nail and rusty wire holds up a PHOTO of SINCLAIR and the CAST OF AN ALIEN ABDUCTION MOVIE filmed in town.

RUBY

We told you.

SINCLAIR

Hot shot fire crew'll be mighty disappointed.

COLE

Fuck off, Prince William the Kid.

SINCLAIR

Watch yourself there, son. Don't think I won't throw you two in the tank for as long as my little ol' heart desires.

RUBY

So what are you going to do about it?

SINCLAIR

What this town needs is bodies. No bodies, no closure. Loretta will turn up like she always does. Next week it'll be werewolves. Or the mummy's tomb. Or the creature from the goddamn Black Lagoon.

COLE

What do you mean? She's done this before?

SINCLAIR

Son, if I listened to everything that woman spouted off I'd be trudging up and down that hill for the rest of my life. She's a worthless base head and I ain't got time for it. Not with those four boys gone missing.

RUBY

Then get your men up there, where we said.

SINCLAIR

Well, shucks, now there's a brilliant idea. Did so myself this very morning before I stumbled upon y'all. Ain't nothing' up there but a cabin burned to hell.

(beat)

Nothing we've got to worry about. They'll take care of themselves like they always do.

RUBY sits up.

RUBY

You've seen this before, haven't you?

SINCLAIR

Meth heads running around in the woods? You aren't from around these parts, are you?

COLE

And you are?

RUBY

You know what I'm talking about.

SINCLAIR

I'm positive I haven't the faintest notion.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

RUBY AND COLE step out into the bright sunlight and the deserted highway. The pickup's parked a ways down. COLE smacks his hat against his thigh, makes dust.

COLE

If he knew anything, the papers would know it too.

RUBY

Not much in the way of papers, though.
It's just the high school beat,
remember?

COLE

He's been trying to drum up money by
turning this place into a zoo for
years.

RUBY

This wasn't those happy aliens in
that movie. Those men up there.
They were diseased by something not
from here.

RUBY REALIZES WHAT HE'S JUST SAID AND MAKES THE CONNECTION.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LABS - FLASH

The single room cabin from before. THE SHEPHERD BOYS cooking
meth.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - RUBY & COLE

RUBY

You saw that thing as well as I did.
You think those yokel's could've
engineered a piece of hardware like
that?

COLE'S FACE DARKENS.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - THE LOGGERS - FLASH

They PULL A TREE STUMP out of the ground with a tractor.
The FOREMAN waves for them to stop. They gather around the
BIG PIT IN THE GROUND.

FINE WHITE SHARDS like thorns run the roots, shimmering like
the arms of jelly-fish.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - RUBY & COLE

RUBY

They weren't cooking.
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

They found it. Loretta lied to us.
And she led us right into the
slaughter.

COLE takes a second. Moves inward. He squints past the sun
and puts the hat back on. Heading back to the truck.

COLE

Staying at Loretta's. Need a ride
back?

RUBY

Cole...

COLE

Be seeing you around then, guy.

RUBY stands there favoring the bad knee and watches COLE
DRIVE OFF.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

SINCLAIR stands at the window, sipping his tea, and watches
RUBY limp up the highway. He paces back to the desk and
takes a seat, spinning his chair around and opening the file
cabinet against the wall.

There's a shoe box at the bottom.

He removes a CHARRED VIAL from it.

AND THE PHONE BEGINS TO RING.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DOHENY ESTATE - MORNING - ESTABLISHING

A modest Louisiana-style plantation affair of 55,000 sq. ft.
or so, dropped right into the desert. The yard stretches
from one horizon to the other.

A GRAPE VINE. A BIG ONE.

A POLICE CRUISER pulls in front. SHERIFF SINCLAIR exits. A
speck in the dust.

EXT. THE YARD - CONTINUOUS

THE IMMACULATE RETAINER waits for him by the fence. Carrying
a tray with chilled glass and bottle of frosty mineral water,
his hair parted and oiled just so above his perfect tuxedo,
he seems as if he's waited millennia to say--

IMMACULATE RETAINER

Master Doheny has been expecting you
for some time now.

SINCLAIR sweats through his uniform. Tips his hat, "No
Thanks," to the inviting tray, and the IMMACULATE RETAINER
motions to the gate.

EXT. GRAPE VINE - MOMENTS LATER

AN ARMY OF MEXICAN MIGRANT WORKERS PICK GRAPES. Cool and
precise in the stifling heat.

CARLISLE DOHENY, 67, an imposing figure at 6'2", wears all
white under a big straw hat, picking grapes alongside them.

SINCLAIR approaches to a safe distance, and like a good lad,
does not speak until spoken to.

DOHENY

The Crash, the boycotts, and now the
boom, all the while the world spins
quietly along. My father offered me
this simple coda, which has dominated
the course of my life: "save the
pleasantries for the pageantry, my
good boy."

(beat)

Sheriff Sinclair, I presume?

SINCLAIR

Carlisle Doheny, isn't it? A wonder
it has taken me this long.

They shake hands. DOHENY with a genuine smile, SINCLAIR
with an anxious one.

DOHENY

The wonder, my good boy, is right
under our feet. Scientifically
speaking, of course, just in case
you try to peg me as a holistic.
I'm old and I live in Arizona, but
you won't find me wearing turquoise
or speedwalking. And what is it
brings you so far from Brighton?

SINCLAIR

Brixton, sir.

DOHENY

Brixton, then, of course, of course.

SINCLAIR'S accent slips a little.

SINCLAIR

To be honest, sir, the work.

DOHENY

Plenty of mills in Brixton, I imagine?

SINCLAIR

Nonesuch for me.

DOHENY nods, clips a section of the vine with his shears and offers it to SINCLAIR.

DOHENY

What you hold in your nonesuch hands
is both our fortunes, my good boy.
A genetically modified organism that
someday will feed the world, provide
insulin to the diabetic, and even,
may I be so bold, give your unborn
son his green eyes.

SINCLAIR

And what's the going rate of a bushel
of grapes these days, Mr. Doheny?

DOHENY

More than you want to know.
(Beat)
Worth far more than a wedding ring,
but what isn't? How's Margaret
Shepherd doing these days?

SINCLAIR

I beg your pardon?

DOHENY removes his gloves and offers them with his shears to a waiting MIGRANT. He steers SINCLAIR down the grove.

DOHENY

There may be a wide parade marching
through your mind, but there is little
room for error in this case, and
much less for pleasantries.

(beat)

More than Ole' Shep's wife, I'm
wondering how he and the boys are
doing?

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - WHITE MOUNTAINS, AZ - DAY

THROUGH THE SCOPE OF A HIGH-POWERED RIFLE, CROSS-HAIRS SWEEP
OVER THE BRUSH.

THE BODY OF AN ASHEN GREY MUTATED LOGGER is sprawled on the ground, mouth agape at the sky as if dying of dehydration, clawing his way to the edge of the forest. It's clutching the burnt out VIAL in one hand. Whatever they were dosing, it's long gone now.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
They've begun to die off.

DOHENY (V.O.)
It'll take more than that, won't it.

SINCLAIR (V.O.)
Yes, sir. More than you want to know.

It's SINCLAIR behind the scope. His CROSS-HAIRS land on one of the STARVING LOGGERS.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Billy.

BLAST--

HE LETS OFF A ROUND -- RIGHT THROUGH THE CHEST. BILLY stops moving.

SINCLAIR takes a moment to readjust, get a good grip before SEARCHING THROUGH THE SCOPE AGAIN AND FINDING...

ANOTHER LOGGER. GNAWING AT HIS OWN CALF ON THE CANOPY FLOOR.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Richard.

BLAST--

A KILLING SHOT THAT SEVERS RICHARD'S NECK.

SINCLAIR'S on the move, ducking through the brush and finding another vantage point like the back of his hand. He's winded, but reinvigorated with the hunt, tossing his Stetson aside and relishing in the ultimate kill to come.

HE FINDS HIS NEXT SHOT.

SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Cliff.

AND CLIFF SHEPHERD IS DOWN, TOO.

SINCLAIR keeps moving through the forest, on fire now. Only one more to go, the one he's been waiting for.

He finds the ASHEN GEOFF "OLE' SHEP" SHEPHERD, ON HIS BACK AND PICKING AT THE INSIDES OF HIS RIB CAGE.

SINCLAIR WINCES.

BLAST--

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF OLE' SHEP'S HEAD.

SINCLAIR drops the rifle, picks up THE SHOVEL waiting next to him, and goes to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLE'S TRUCK - DAY

COLE fumbles under the wood planks of the truck bed, his hand reemerging with the PLASTIC SIX PACK RING, all that's left of the beer. COLE rubs his stubble and eyes LORETTA'S TRAILER up the driveway.

INT. LORETTA'S TRAILER - MOMENTS LATER

COLE sets his hat on the counter and stands at the sill. Just watching the SILENCE of the place. Dust on everything. No wind billowing the lace curtains now.

He finally comes to and begins digging around the small cupboard. Pushing aside water-stained glasses, he KNOCKS OUT THE BACK PANEL and reaches inside, PULLING OUT A BOTTLE OF BOURBON.

COLE grabs a water-stained glass, but then SPOTS SOMETHING -- a dirty glass in the sink that STILL HAS LORETTA'S LIPSTICK ON IT. HE GRABS THAT ONE INSTEAD, pouring himself a double.

COLE sprawls out on the couch, STARING at the glass in his hand and the etchings of LORETTA'S LIPS there. He lines up his lips with hers and downs it.

Pours himself another.

He grabs his Silver Belly to cover his face and pass out, when he see RUBY'S NOTEBOOK stuck in there, a loose page hanging off. He takes it up and reads.

RUBY (V.O.)

It's just like being trapped in the dark with nothing but your thoughts. That's what that one Jessup said, he'd seen one of them come back. He said it was the worst nothingness imaginable. Like being trapped with your own shortcomings. In a dark box. For all time.

COLE flips the page.

There's a SKETCH OF JESSUP on the opposite page, as he looked during their meeting at the Greasy Spoon. COLE tosses the notebook aside and puts the hat low over his eyes.

Tries to sleep.

But after a while, he picks up the notebook and just says--

COLE

Aw, shit.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY - TIJUANA GHETTO - FLASHBACK

We're back with RUBY, searching for the LITTLE BOY dressed for Sunday mass. WATER DRIPS from the ceiling to the puddles in the hallway, a child's muddy footprints tracking toward THE DOOR -- RUBY'S PRESSING HIS EAR AGAINST IT. He listens intently to something on the other side he can barely make out.

BLAST--

A SHOTGUN SLUG TEARS A MASSIVE HOLE THROUGH THE DOOR, CENTIMETERS ABOVE RUBY'S HEAD.

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO HEAR BUT THE RINGING IN RUBY'S EARS.

RUBY braces himself against the wall beside the door. His eyes are wide through the shock and disorientation, a BEAD OF BLOOD ALREADY TRICKLING DOWN AN EARLOBE.

THE BIG SON OF A BITCH comes marching through the doorway with the shotgun and RUBY'S ready for him.

In a quick but sloppy maneuver, RUBY SLAMS THE GUY AGAINST THE WALL AND SWEEPS THE FEET OUT FROM UNDER HIM. Ruby, though on top of THE BIG SON OF A BITCH, lands on the INJURED KNEE.

The shotgun is trapped between them.

THEY LOCK EYES.

IT'S JESSUP.

That moment of recognition between the two men is all the conversation that's needed.

THEY WRESTLE FOR CONTROL OF THE SHOTGUN, JESSUP obviously the stronger of the two and RUBY using all that painful leverage on the INJURED KNEE just to match him.

RUBY GROANS as the tide begins to shift against him. THE SHOTGUN DISAPPEARS BETWEEN THEM.

BLAST--

A little blood SPLATTERS on RUBY'S face and the WIND GOES OUT OF HIM. He struggles for breath through HEAVY PANTS, A LOW WAIL escaping his lips.

JESSUP smirks.

RUBY ROLLS OFF OF HIM.

THE SHOTGUN CLATTERS TO THE GROUND.

AND JESSUP'S GOT A BIG, FLESHY CRATER RUNNING THROUGH THE WHOLE OF HIM.

RUBY catches his breath as JESSUP turns his head to consider him.

AND RUBY WATCHES JESSUP DIE.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBY'S ROOM - SHOW LOW MOTEL - MORNING

RUBY tugs clothes out of his suitcase, dumping the whole thing out on the floor. He wrangles the covers, checks under the pillows before getting down to look under the bed. There's nothing under there but he runs his hand along the floor anyway.

THE PHONE RINGS.

RUBY picks it up.

RUBY (INTO PHONE)
Cole, you've still got my--

He stops himself short. No words on the other side. JUST BREATHING, SOMEONE LISTENING TO HIM.

RUBY
Hello?

No one answers.

The breathing continues. It's DEEP AND FERAL, a monster on the other end of the line.

THE VOICE (OVER PHONE)
Ruby...?

RUBY KNOWS THE VOICE.

He hangs up the phone with a thumb on the cradle. Realizing he's given himself away, Ruby rips a page from the first thing available -- a page from Gideon -- and uses a pen to dial something on the rotary.

OPERATOR (OVER PHONE)
Operator, how can I direct your call?

RUBY
Is there some way I can find out who just called me, or where they were calling from?

OPERATOR
Not unless you're the FBI.

RUBY slams down the phone.

The glare of a passing car windshield lights up the room for a moment, the mess he's made, before continuing up the highway.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

RUBY'S SEDAN and COLE'S TRUCK slow to a stop in the morning light, facing opposite ends of the road, alone on the long stretch.

COLE hands the NOTEBOOK out the window and RUBY takes it with a slight nod of his head. He tucks it out of sight.

RUBY
Went by Loretta's to pick up the car. You were gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANOTHER ROAD - MORNING

The mesas shrug on their red robes with the morning sunlight. AN UNKNOWN VEHICLE working every one of its pistons hard. There's no way to see who the driver is. It's hard to say you even see what you see when HE BLURS BY.

THE BONY HAND ON THE WHEEL, THE COLOR OF ASH. The distorted reflection on the windshield a warped face, Picasso's *THE SCREAM*.

STILL, IT'S JESSUP.

COLE (V.O.)
Guess we both had the same idea.

RUBY (V.O.)
How about that.

BACK TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

RUBY watches the road, uncomfortable with blocking it even though there's no traffic for miles.

COLE
Where you headed next?

RUBY
I've still got a few leads on my son to check out.

COLE
Case like that could keep a man going for years.

RUBY
Something like that. Headed somewhere around here. Town called Snow Flake.

COLE
Yeah, I know it. Middle of nowhere. You thought this was? This is Atlantic City compared to that.

RUBY
How about you?

COLE
Dunno. Maybe back to LA. P.I. some more.

They nod to each other.

RUBY
Well.

COLE
Well.

RUBY begins to pull away, but COLE reverses to catch up with him.

COLE (CONT'D)
You were right out there. That wasn't coincidence. Only a fool would believe that it was.

RUBY

Thanks. My next story, it's just up
this way, right?

COLE

Hell. Why don't I just show you?

RUBY watches COLE pull the truck to the side of the road. COLE cuts the ignition, pulling the throaty E-brake and leaving the keys behind. He SPITS and kicks a tire goodbye. The birds in the nearby field squawk complaints, fly off.

COLE is himself again, walking too tall. He jogs back to the sedan and ducks inside the passenger seat.

COLE (CONT'D)

Transmission's screwed.

(beat)

It was Loretta's anyway.

RUBY understands, and shows he does by gripping and releasing the wheel, struggling for the right words.

RUBY

I'm sorry. I know what it's like.
Sort of. Losing them is the same.

COLE

That ain't nothing like this. You
care.

RUBY stares at COLE a while, who's already pushed his seat back and covered his head with his Silver Belly. RUBY puts the sedan in drive and heads up the road. The morning is a beautiful one.

Birds are out.

They can't be seen, but the shadows of their V-FORMATION rain down the road, tailing the sedan until it disappears on the horizon.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE